

Light it Right!

Idaho's Open "Outdoor" Burning Guidelines

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality ♦ Air Quality Division ♦ 1410 N. Hilton ♦ Boise, ID 83706 ♦ (208) 373-0502

What is Open Burning?

Open burning is any burning outdoors that does not pass through a stack, duct, or chimney. This includes outdoor residential, agricultural, and prescribed burning.

Open burning also applies to material that is burned in burn barrels, air curtain destructors, or other such devices. In Idaho, open burning is regulated by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as well as other state, tribal, and local government agencies.

Health and Other Impacts

Smoke from open burning pollutes the air with a mixture of fine particles and gases. All types of open burning can affect the air we breathe. What goes up doesn't immediately go away. And burners may be held legally responsible for any damages or injury caused by open burning.

Smoke from all types of open burning can:

- Make breathing difficult
- Cause or contribute to serious health problems
- Impair visibility
- Create road and aviation safety problems
- Be a nuisance to neighbors

Alternatives to Burning

Burning can waste valuable resources. To prevent this, some open burning can be minimized through better planning, reuse, or recycling. Yard trimmings and other vegetative matter can be composted. Newspaper and cardboard can be recycled. Brush, prunings, and wood waste can be turned into usable products such as wood chips or paperboard.

By making a few sensible choices, we can reduce pollution and help the environment.

However, open burning may be necessary when reasonable alternatives do not exist. This may be the case for some types of agricultural burning as well as prescribed burns on forest and rangelands. Contact the local solid waste program or district health department for more information on alternatives to burning.

Burning Restrictions

DEQ's open burning rules are applicable statewide and can be found at <http://www2.state.id.us/adm/adminrules/rules/idapa58/0101.pdf> (Sections 600-617).

Maybe – Check First

DEQ's open burning rules allow these burning activities only *under specified conditions*. Contact your local DEQ for more information.

- ✓ Recreational and warming fires
- ✓ Weed control
- ✓ Fire training
- ✓ Residential solid waste burning
- ✓ Orchard fires
- ✓ Prescribed burning

Prohibited

DEQ's open burning rules prohibit the burning of most processed or manufactured materials. (Certain exemptions may apply.)

- ✗ Garbage from food preparation
- ✗ Dead animals or animal waste
- ✗ Junk motor vehicles or parts
- ✗ Tires or other rubber materials
- ✗ Plastics
- ✗ Asphaltic materials
- ✗ Tar and petroleum materials
- ✗ Paints
- ✗ Preservative-treated wood
- ✗ Trade waste (commercial, industrial, or construction waste)
- ✗ Insulated wire
- ✗ Pathogenic waste

Light it Right! Light it Right! Light it Right! Light it Right! Light it Right!

Additional Burn Restrictions

DEQ may issue health advisories and burn restrictions based on weather and air quality conditions. Notices are generally issued in the morning, but may be issued other times as needed. Notices are announced through the media (internet, radio, television, newspapers).

Be aware that local ordinances may further restrict or prohibit open burning. Always check with your local fire protection service to find out if burn restrictions are in effect or permits are required due to fire danger. Note that DEQ does not issue burn permits. If you live within the exterior boundaries of an Indian reservation, check with the tribal air quality or fire protection offices.

To find out about air quality conditions or any DEQ-issued burn restrictions in your area, visit <http://www.deq.state.id.us/air/aqindex.cfm> or call:

- Greater Sandpoint (800) 633-6247
- Kootenai County (800) 633-6247
- Pocatello/Chubbuck (208) 236-6173
- Silver Valley (800) 633-6247
- Treasure Valley (208) 373-0313 or 0514

Types of Burning

Residential Solid Waste Burning

Residential burning of vegetative yard waste such as tree leaves, yard trimmings, and gardening waste is prohibited unless:

- ✓ Burning is conducted on the property where the waste was generated.
- ✓ Burning is allowed by local ordinances.

However, when collection service is unavailable, residents may burn combustible rubbish, such as paper and cardboard, as long as the two conditions above are met.

Burning of prohibited material (garbage, plastics, etc.) is not allowed.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning is the open burning of forest and rangeland to accomplish land management objectives such as improving wildlife habitat, restoring or maintaining ecosystem health, and reducing fire hazard.

Idaho and Montana operate a joint smoke management program for land managers who conduct a “major” amount of prescribed burning. The purpose of the program is to minimize smoke impacts from prescribed fire. To find out more, visit <http://www.smokemu.org>.

Agricultural Burning

Agricultural burning includes a variety of activities such as the open burning of post-harvest crop residue, weed control along fencelines and ditches, and orchard trimmings.

Agricultural burning is conducted to:

- Improve crop yields
- Dispose of crop residues
- Control weeds, pests, and disease
- Reduce the need for herbicide and pesticide treatments
- Reduce fire hazards
- Clear irrigation ditches and canals

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) adopted rules relating to crop residue burning in 2003. (Note that the rules do not apply to weed control fires along ditches and fence lines.) Agreements also are in place to cooperatively implement the rules with the three northern Idaho Indian reservations.

Contact ISDA or your tribal air quality office for more information, or visit the ISDA Web site at <http://www.idahoag.us/Crop/crdinfo.htm>.

Proper Burning Basics

DEQ recommends that burners:

- ☞ Use alternatives to burning to dispose of material whenever possible.
- ☞ Check with local fire protection service about permit requirements.
- ☞ Check with DEQ about air quality conditions and any burn restrictions.
- ☞ Burn during the middle of the day when ventilation is generally good. Inversions and still air keep smoke low to the ground at night.
- ☞ Burn when fuels are dry and well aerated so the fire is hot, yet manageable. Wet or dirt covered materials will smolder and create more smoke.
- ☞ Build piles in open areas away from overhead branches and wires.
- ☞ Scrape away burnable materials several feet around piles. The result should be bare soil.
- ☞ Never leave fire unattended and have fire suppression equipment and water available. You can be held responsible for any damage caused by a fire that gets out of control.
- ☞ Burn at least 50 feet away from any structure.
- ☞ Test burn a small area prior to burning.
- ☞ If a burn has the potential to cause visibility hazards on roadways, contact the local or state transportation agency prior to burning for applicable traffic control requirements.

Reducing Smoke Exposure

DEQ recommends that burners:

- ☞ Follow proper burning basics.
- ☞ Provide adequate fire breaks to maintain control, especially downwind.
- ☞ Minimize burning time to minimize exposure.
- ☞ Rotate workers out of heavy smoke areas frequently.
- ☞ Notify local area prior to burning.
- ☞ Be aware of signs of over exposure to smoke such as fatigue and illness.
- ☞ Include smoke impacts in job hazard training.

When smoke levels become a problem, DEQ recommends that citizens:

- ☞ Stay indoors or seek clean air facilities.
- ☞ Reduce indoor activities that generate dust (cooking, vacuuming, etc.).
- ☞ Use air conditioners in cars and homes (close fresh air intake).
- ☞ Keep windows and doors closed if not too hot outside.
- ☞ Reduce or avoid exertion.
- ☞ Use an indoor humidifier for breathing relief.
- ☞ People with asthma should follow their asthma management plan.
- ☞ Seek medical treatment if you have trouble breathing.
- ☞ Report any smoke impacts to DEQ or other appropriate agencies.

Learn More

DEQ Contacts

For more information about permit requirements, air quality conditions, or options to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste, contact:

- **Regional Offices**
 - Boise.....(208) 373-0550
 - Coeur d'Alene.....(208) 769-1422
 - Idaho Falls.....(208) 528-2650
 - Lewiston.....(208) 799-4370
 - Pocatello.....(208) 236-6160
 - Twin Falls.....(208) 736-2190
- **State Office**
 - Boise.....(208) 373-0502

Other Agency Contacts

- **Idaho Department of Agriculture**
 - Boise State Office: (208) 332-8500
 - Grower Burn Hotline: (866) 224-2456
 - North Idaho Complaint Hotline: (800) 345-1007
 - South Idaho Complaint Hotline: (866) 435-0490
- **Idaho Department of Lands**
 - (208) 769-1525
- **Tribes in Northern Idaho**
 - Coeur d'Alene Tribe: (208) 686-1800
 - Kootenai Tribe of Idaho: (208) 267-3519
 - Nez Perce Tribe: (208) 843-7300, ext. 2401
- **U.S. Bureau of Land Mgmt. (State office)**
 - (208) 373-3873
- **U.S. Forest Service**
 - North Idaho: (406) 329-3511
 - South Idaho: (801) 625-5306